

Equal Opportunities Commission
Overseas House
Quay Street Manchester M3 3HN

Telephone 061-833 9244

From The Baroness Platt of Writtle,
C.B.E., M.A., C.Eng., M.R.Ae.S.,
Chairman.



Equal
Opportunities
Commission

BP/EMM

13 March 1986

R17/3

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP.
The Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON. SW1.

Dear Prime Minister

It is now nearly two years since you very kindly spared time to see me just before you launched the WISE Bus. The bus has proved to be very popular, and I am sure will encourage more girls to take an interest in technology, and perhaps later lead on to careers in that field of work, where there is such a shortage of skills.

I enclose an article I recently wrote for the Institution of Electrical Engineers in connection with Industry Year, which I hope you might find interesting.

Douglas Hurd has recently re-appointed me as Chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission for a final two years from this May. If you were able to spare me the time I would very much welcome the opportunity to discuss women's issues with you again as we did in July 1984.

Yours sincerely

Platt

Baroness Platt of Writtle

A woman's place (is) in industry

**by Baroness Platt of Writtle
Chairman, Equal Opportunities Commission**

**INDUSTRY
YEAR 1986**

INDUSTRY YEAR 1986

A woman's place (is) in industry

With the school population falling, the UK's skills shortage can only get worse if it continues to draw predominantly on only half the population. WISE 84 did much to encourage women into industry, and Industry Year aims to reaffirm the initiative

by Baroness Platt of Writtle

About 40 years ago I worked in industry during the war, a young woman engineer very much on her own in a man's world. We were fighting for our lives as a nation, so we had to work long hours and the niceties of life were low on the list of the nation's priorities. Nevertheless, I enjoyed my work and the easy camaraderie of the highly skilled almost all-male workforce in the experimental flight test department of Hawker Aircraft. Newly down from university with a mechanical science trip to learn a lot about the practicalities of flight and testing aircraft and learn it fast. It was a demanding and exciting life.

Today things are very different. When I visit modern industry I am amazed to see how much more attractive and safety-conscious factories are — thank goodness. Potted plants, polished floors, comfortable canteens, these things were unheard of in my day, but are taken for granted now. The new electronics industries look more like hospitals than factories with their accent on dust-free atmospheres. The workforce in light clothes or overalls is a far cry from the boilersuits and practical warm clothing we had to wear in cold hangars. All these changes make industry a far more attractive place to work for women, and I hope many more will consider the idea in Industry Year both for themselves and as a worthwhile career for their children.

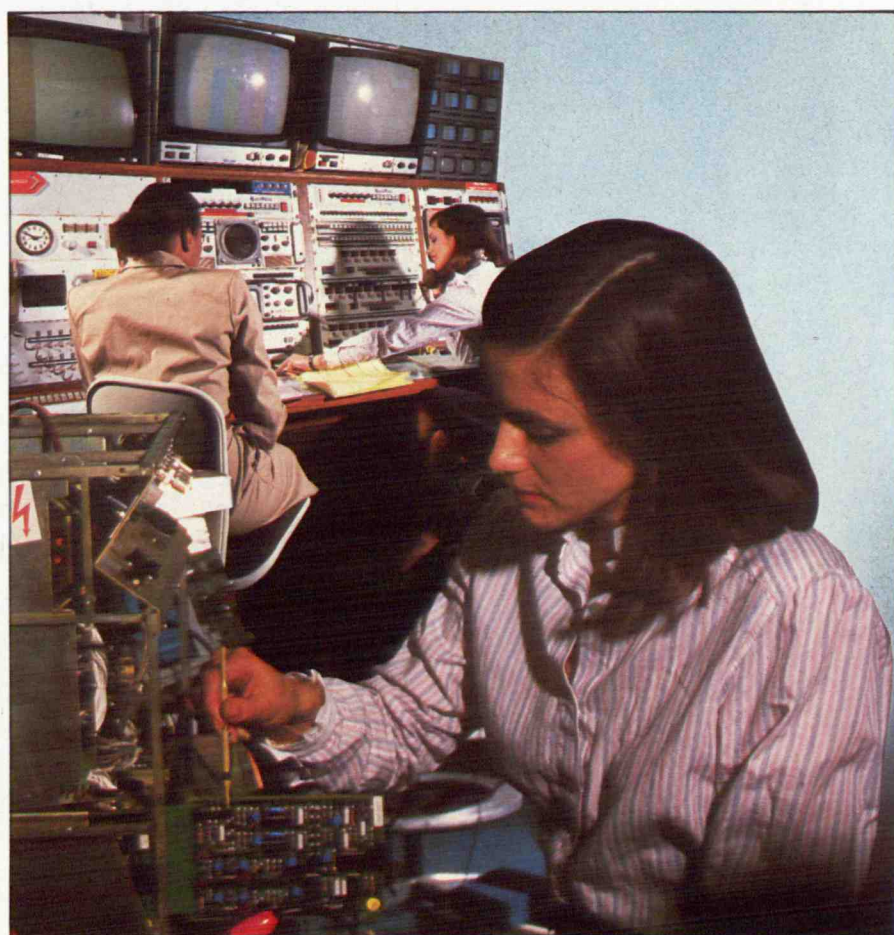
Many events will happen in Industry Year to encourage the public to learn more about the real facts of industry. There will be open days at local factories, and I hope women's organisations and women and their families will make a real effort to take part in these visits, so that when they talk about industry and the sort of jobs it offers they will be able to speak from first-hand knowledge. The Royal Society of Arts Women's Committee for Industry Year is closely in touch with the major women's voluntary organisations and women in the trade union

movement and it is certainly our aim and object to see as many women as possible involved in these interesting opportunities. Ignorance breeds fear, knowledge will lead to a deeper understanding of the contribution industry makes to our lives.

The aim of Industry Year 1986 is to encourage a better understanding of industry, its essential role, and its service to the community, and to win acceptance for it.

It is questionable how often women — and men for that matter — stop to think what industry has done for them. Apart from the wealth-creating role of industry and all that provides in terms of the tax base for our welfare services which we all take for granted, industry also produces so many products to make our lives more healthy and comfortable.

Just cast your mind back to a pre-industrial age of 100 years ago. People walked everywhere unless they were



1 Electronics work at the BBC

(courtesy BBC)



2 Leaflets and stickers produced by the EOC for the WISE 84 campaign

lucky enough to own a horse or live near the occasional railway. Aeroplanes, cars, buses were unheard of. People were confined on the whole to their own towns and villages.

Homes were lit by oil lamps and heated by coal and wood. Water was pumped by hand or carried for use. The life of the average woman was one constant round of drudgery: carrying coal and water, chopping wood, trimming lampwicks, scrubbing and mangling clothes, sweeping and scrubbing floors. Think of the transformation manufactured goods have made to women's lives. Refrigerators, electric and gas ovens, central heating, washing machines, deep freezes, telephones. The application of electricity in the home and the inventiveness of engineers and designers has transformed the lives of women so that they can now take far more part in the working and public life of the nation.

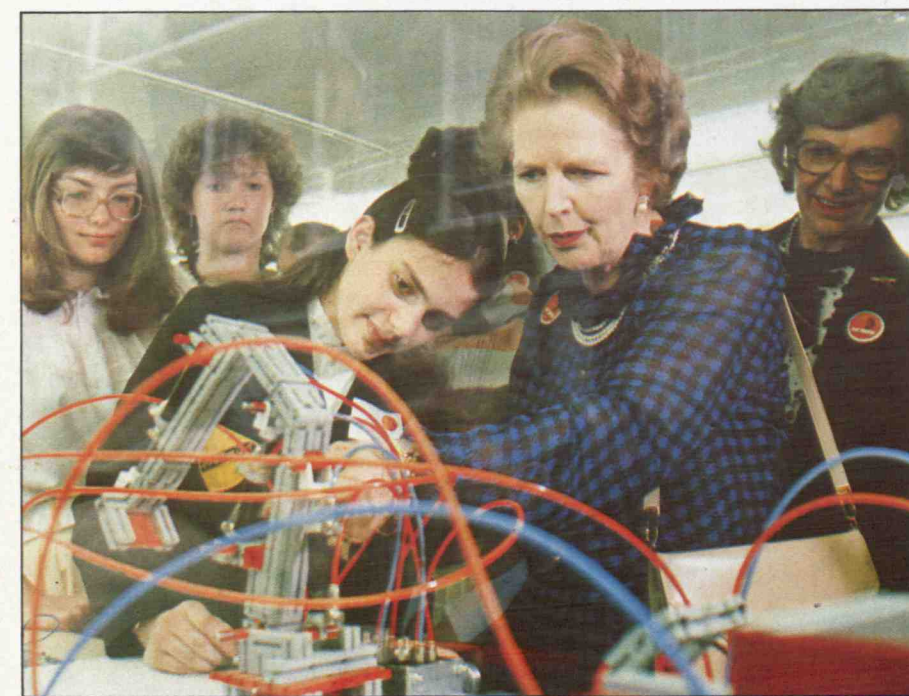
The WISE (Women into Science & Engineering) campaign set up by the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Engineering Council was designed to take things one stage further, to encourage women themselves to take qualifications, to become more knowledgeable

able in science and technology so that they could not only use these labour-saving devices more intelligently but also help to design and market them themselves as part of the industrial life in this country.

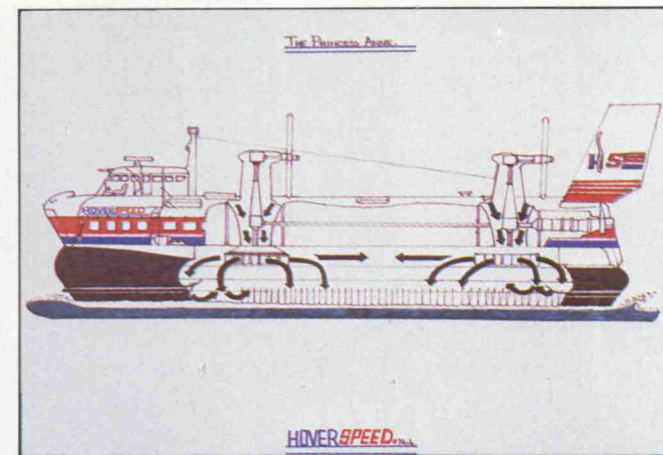
Now comes the challenge of Industry Year. Women of all ages need to keep up their maths and science and craft, design and technology together with their more traditional human and linguistic skills. That broad combination of knowledge is just the basis for a really innovative career woman in industry in today's information-technology based society, who can have a most interesting and well-paid job while contributing to the team designing and marketing new and valuable products to the benefit of society and themselves.

Craft, design and technology in schools needs to move up market from the old, rather dull and pedestrian wood and metalwork, and take on a new dimension in the practical problem-solving side of the work.

The new dimension will help young people in their later working situations to tackle the problems that they meet. Mechanical, technical, electrical,



4 The Prime Minister launching the WISE Bus



3 Illustration of girls' CDT project work at Hockley Greensward School, Essex

human problems: problems after school don't come in single subjects. Science & Technology Regional Organisations (SATROs) are closely involved in Industry Year, and there project competitions will help to highlight this aspect of craft, design and technology and enable students and schools to win exciting prizes and publicity.

It would be a good idea in Industry Year if teachers in co-operation with SATROs could plan projects for their students together with their local industry, including a properly structured visit, not just trailing round a factory which does not lead to understanding of the true nature of its work. Perhaps industry would help by providing prizes, and relevant materials and ideas connected with the development of their products. Best of all if young engineers and scientists at apprentice, craft, technician or technologist level could be released to help with the project and talk to the students about their work — young women as well as young men. They can more easily relate to young people of school age and really explain to them what their jobs are about and what makes them interesting, and at the same time also explode some of the myths about industry in children's minds.

Increasingly the application of electricity and industrial design is contributing to the health of the people of our nation. Apart from the better keeping properties of food in refrigerators and deep freezers and the better cooking facilities available today, there is also the improved apparatus available in hospitals for saving and protecting lives. Kidney machines, incubators for saving the lives of premature babies, X-ray machines, anaesthesia, and the manufacture of all sorts of pharmaceutical products — to mention but a few applications of modern science — have improved the life expectancy and health of the nation. All these developments are of great interest to women, and it is important that they should really understand how the apparatus works so that they too can control it, have the opportunity to hold satisfying, worthwhile and well paid jobs with the sense of their service to society as a whole.

With the increasing applications of

technology in all fields, computer-aided design and manufacture, robotics, travel and tourism, hotel bookings, whatever young people's interests, they need to know how the computer's efficiency can be applied to the benefit of their particular specialism. That way our technology will be able to compete with that of other high-technology nations and we can maintain the standard of living we all desire.

In 1981 there were 900 000 18-year-olds. In 1995 there will only be 600 000 — a dramatic drop of one-third. Already we are short as a nation of electronics and information-technology skills. The WISE campaign is about encouraging girls and women to enter these fields of work and bring their precious skills and talents to bear in these fields. As a girl at school wrote recently 'half the brains of the nation are in girls' and women's heads'. They need to have the courage to use those brains in new fields of work. As one who did so many years ago I can say how fascinating and satisfying work in industry can be. I hope many more girls and women will find it so. We cannot afford any longer to do without them if we are to continue to succeed as a developed industrial nation.

Many large employers have fortunately realised this and are going to considerable efforts to recruit girls and women, which did not happen even 10 years ago. It is a matter of enlightened self-interest, as without their technical input the forward-looking companies know they cannot prosper.

As more women enter industry and gain experience it will be important for industry to see that their talents are more fully used. Many women entered industry without prequalifications when they were young and now regret that they are stuck in low-paid dead-end repetitive jobs which are always the jobs most subject to redundancy.

As part of Industry Year it is important that industry should show its human side to the full. Caring about and retraining its existing workforce will not only exhibit those qualities but make good commercial sense in developing its most important resources to the full — its human resources. Employers are continually maintaining machinery and investing in new technological equipment. They know it would be madness not to do so if they want to keep their products up to date and retain their competitive edge in world markets. The Japanese know that that is only half the story, and continually update and retrain their workforce so that their skills are kept in line with the operation of the new equipment. We have got to do that far more too, and it is important to see that women willing and capable of being retrained are given opportunities to do so. That will be necessary at all levels of the workforce right up to management, and should contribute greatly to company loyalty as the women see opportunities open up for promotion and more interesting jobs, instead of redundancy.

Last year the Equal Opportunities



5 Di Hill, Manager of ICL Off-site Unit

[courtesy ICL]

Commission produced its Code of Practice with all-party support leading to parliamentary approval. Its launch was wholeheartedly supported by the CBI, the TUC and the Department of Employment. We are hoping that it will be increasingly put into effect by employers as part of Industry Year. It is a practical and short document (HMSO £1.50 — ten for £7.50), and we hope will explain the law clearly to all involved in industry and thus avoid litigation. It goes on to give ideas on how to develop the skills and talents of women — 44% of the workforce and 51% of the population. It talks about recruitment, promotion, training, and how to help men and women to combine careers with responsible family life, a subject of fundamental importance in Industry Year when so many women go out to work. The availability of flexitime, part-time work, job sharing and off-site working can be very convenient to both employers and employees and be commercially attractive and lead to greater efficiency.

In December 1985 the Engineering Council launched its Career Break Working Party report, packed full of practical ideas to enable young women's talents and skills to remain up to date and move with the times while they bridge their comparatively short career break today as they have their families. That certainly makes good commercial sense in not losing expensive public and private investment in their education and training. Later they will probably have 20 years of full-time working life ahead of them to the mutual benefit of themselves and their employers as they remain in touch with fast-moving technological developments in their chosen careers.

Women represent half our national talent. Yet women working in industry often face traditional attitudes and work-



6 Selection of leaflets published by well known companies to help recruit women

ing conditions which raise barriers to their opportunities and development. Unless industry takes positive action to change this, it will not attract the girls and women whose talents are needed for the future.

Industry Year 1986 provides an incentive and an opportunity for employers to review and improve existing practice, and it is up to all women to make their voices heard and their needs known within industry during the year.

Let us make sure in 1986 and in the years to come that women see industry as a living force for the welfare of our nation. Let us also make sure that industry itself encourages them to take an active and constructive part in our industrial life, so that they feel at home there, among friends. They need to feel they will be fairly and sympathetically treated when it comes to recruitment, training and promotion, and in combining a successful career with responsible family lives. That way they too will reach positions of responsibility in management, and their skills, talents and expertise will be used to the full to boost our industrial success in the markets of the world. It is action like this which will help to halt our industrial decline, and ensure in future years that the UK earns its living and increases its prosperity to the benefit of us all.



hite M

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

15 April 1986

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 13 March and I am sorry it has taken us a little time to reply. Mrs. Thatcher would be delighted to have a further meeting with you and if your secretary could ring me on 930-4433 we could discuss a mutually convenient time and date.

CAROLINE RYDER

The Baroness Platt of Writtle, C.B.E.

Dr

cc TW Sharbourne.



Janice

This is the
Equal Opp
Bureau
are giving
advice

10 DOWNING STREET

- 1 This Hyde & R. pl. add
2 TW Addison
style
CR.

The Lord Pres.

Said but hardly
Platt would ask
to see PM &
discuss Women's
issues and the
Manager. The PM
virtually committed

herself to seeing
hardy P.

N. L. W

8 April

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

14 April 1986

R 15/4

Dear Caroline

Thank you for your letter of 17 March, with which you enclosed the letter of 13 March from Lady Platt, Chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission, requesting a meeting with the Prime Minister. No doubt you will also have seen Chris Snell's letter of 21 March.

Like the Department of Employment, we see no pressing need for a meeting between Lady Platt and the Prime Minister. If the Prime Minister wished to have a general discussion about equal opportunities issues, we agree that a meeting after the publication of the EOC's annual report would be the most sensible time. The report is due to be published on 8 July. A meeting in late summer or early autumn would also have the advantage of falling after the first meeting of the Ministerial group which is to consider matters covered by the Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and is to be chaired by Mr Waddington. The Home Secretary referred to the group in his minute of 19 February to the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister informed Lady Platt of its establishment in her letter of 20 February.

I am copying this letter to Chris Snell at the Department of Employment.

Yours sincerely
W R Fittall

W R FITTALL

Ms Caroline Ryder

Baroness PLATT
26/3



6 1. 8/4

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

Al

17 March 1986

I attach a copy of a letter the Prime Minister has received from Lady Platt, Chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

I should be grateful for advice as soon as possible on whether the Prime Minister should see Lady Platt.

I am copying this letter to Chris Snell (Department of Employment).

Caroline Ryder

Ms Clare Pelham
Home Office.

ECU



DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
1-19 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1H 0ET 5422
TELEPHONE DIRECT LINE 01-215
SWITCHBOARD 01-215 7877

PS/
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

9 April 1986

Mrs C Ryder
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

Dear Mrs Ryder

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH BARONESS PLATT

Thank you for your letter of 24 March enclosing one from Christopher Snell at Department of Employment.

Christopher suggested that DTI might be interested in the meeting in view of Industry Year (IY). Baroness Platt is Chairman of the Industry Year Women's Working Group and a strong supporter of Industry Year's aims. However nothing new is likely to be raised at this meeting and we would certainly not wish to cite Industry Year as a main reason for it to take place.

That said, we would not disagree with Christopher's recommendations on the meeting and we would be happy to provide a short brief on Baroness Platt's involvement in Industry Year if the meeting goes ahead.

I am copying this to Christopher Snell (Department of Employment).

Yours sincerely,

C Bradley

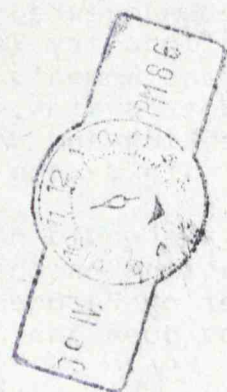
CATHERINE BRADLEY
Private Secretary

JH2BBI



DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
100 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON W1N 1BA
TELEPHONE 01-634 7000
FACSIMILE 01-634 7000

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH BARONESS BLAIR



Baroness PLATT
26/3



1. 8/4

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 March 1986

I attach a self-explanatory letter to the Home Office from the Department of Employment regarding a possible meeting between Lady Platt, Chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Prime Minister.

I would be grateful for your advice on this matter as soon as possible.

(Mrs Caroline Ryder)

Miss Catherine Bradley,
Department of Trade and Industry.

dg



Caxton House Tothill Street London SW1H 9NF

Telephone Direct Line 01-2136460.....

Switchboard 01-213 3000

Clare Pelham
Private Secretary to the
Home Secretary
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London
SW1H 9AT

21 March 1986

Dear Clare,

Caroline Ryder sent me a copy of her letter of 17 March to you seeking advice on whether the Prime Minister should meet Lady Platt, the Chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

The most topical issues for which this Department is responsible and which Lady Platt may want to raise with the Prime Minister, are the Sex Discrimination Bill and in particular the amendments to it which we intend to make to take account of the European Court of Justice's ruling in the Helen Marshall case. Lady Platt is in close touch with DE Ministers about the Bill, and there does not therefore seem to be any pressing need for her to discuss these issues with the Prime Minister.

I would therefore suggest that the publication of the EOC's next annual report in the middle of June would provide a convenient occasion to cover the broad range of the EOC'S concerns and that Caroline Ryder might be advised, if you agree, to offer a meeting fairly soon after that report is published.

I am copying this letter to Caroline Ryder, with the suggestion that she might like to approach DTI too on this matter in view of that Department's interest in Industry Year.

Yours sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER SNELL
Private Secretary





10 DOWNING STREET

I changed
the time to
1000.

CR.

11/6.

SKW

17 April 1986

MEETING WITH LADY PLATT

We have now arranged for the Prime Minister to meet Lady Platt on 16 June at 1030. We noted the points in your letter of 14 April to Caroline Ryder here, but thought, on balance, it would be better to fix the meeting sooner rather than later.

I should be grateful if you would provide us with a brief for the meeting by Thursday, 12 June, in consultation with the Department of Employment.

I am copying this letter to Chris Snell (Department of Employment).

(MARK ADDISON)

William Fittall, Esq.,
Home Office.

BN



10 DOWNING STREET

OK MEH

Lady Platt's office
(EOC) rang.

Sure 16 that-10.30
is acceptable. I told
them you would only ring
back if there was any
change.

Gill

7/4.

E.R.

MR. ADDISON

LADY PLATT

Her secretary rang this morning. I offered Monday 16 June at 1030. She will come back to confirm later today.

Could you please commission briefing when the appointment has been confirmed?

CF

CAROLINE RYDER

17 April 1986

E.B.

DIARY MEETING

MR. WICKS ✓

LADY PLATT

CR

Les & X.

Remind P.A. that
hand W passed this
NL 10.4

I have seen the copies of the minutes between
you and Stephen Sherbourne.

X We have now received advice from DTI and
I think, depending on what you advise, we
should bring this up at the next diary meeting.

Content?

CR.

(Caroline Ryder)

10 April 1986

MR. WICKS

CC. 1. Mrs. Ryder
2. Mr. Addison

Thank you for your note about Lady Platt.
I attach earlier correspondence between
the Prime Minister and Lady Platt which
you ought to be aware of.

LS.

STEPHEN SHERBOURNE

9.4.86

Platt

Prime Minister

Elsbeth Howe mentioned to me the other evening that she believed it would be of great advantage to the Conservative Party and its standing in the country if sometime you found time to invite Lady Platt, Chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission, to come and have a short talk with you about the Commission's work and aspirations. Lady Platt is, of course, a Conservatives and provides a welcome change of emphasis at the Commission to her predecessor.

I believe it would certainly build up her weight and authority if at some point you invited her to come in for a short talk. We could give consideration to an agenda of topics to be discussed.

May I go ahead and set up a meeting, as and when the diary is reasonably free?

Not yet please
- -
mf

MICHAEL ALISON

13.6.84

PRIME MINISTER

Lady Platt has written to you about the importance of qualified young women and the need to increase their contribution to the country and the need for the Conservatives to attract their votes. She proposes a small Central Office working party.

I have sought the advice of Emma Nicholson who has been talking to Lady Platt about this. Emma recommends that you endorse the need to involve professional women and that you suggest that Lady Platt discusses the idea of a working party with Emma, who as vice-chairman would be the obvious person to be Chairman of the working party.

This seems a sensible approach. Do you agree?

If you do this might be a way to involve Lady Platt without you having to see her at this stage as Elspeth Howe suggested.

I attach the letter from Lady Platt (the key paragraph is highlighted on page 2) together with Emma Nicholson's comments.

SS.

STEPHEN SHERBOURNE

15.6.84



Conservative Women's National Committee

32 Smith Square Westminster London SW1P 3HH
Tel. 01-222 9000 Telex 8814563 Fax. 01-222 1135

CONFIDENTIAL

13th June, 1984.

Dear Stephen -

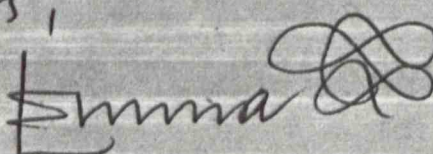
Thank you for sending me a copy of the letter to the Prime Minister from Lady Platt. She and I have indeed talked several times about the immense opportunities now open to our Party in involving on a long term basis, the younger professional women and I see her as a key resource for achieving this difficult but crucial goal.

I would be unhappy if Lady Platt herself set up a Working Party, partly because it is something I very much want to do myself, but also since I am concerned that on this topic in particular we need a unified approach. (I have heard on the grapevine of other initiatives by different people for the same purpose.)

The Prime Minister discussed with me at our recent meeting our need to involve professional women and I put one or two thoughts on how to achieve this. Given that background, may I suggest that she endorses the concept to Lady Platt and asks her to come back to myself to discuss setting up a Working Party, perhaps under my Chairmanship. Incidentally, on the membership of such a group, I would see it to be an all-woman under forty-five years of age membership, certainly with an academic, journalist, industrialist, professional woman and one or two others.

I would see us involving the new Chairman of the Women's Organisation as a co-opted member to keep these links secure. We would be working to prepare proposals for the Prime Minister and Party Chairman.

Forgive a lengthy reply; do please telephone me at the Save the Children Fund on Friday if I can be of further help.

Yours,


EMMA NICHOLSON

Stephen Sherbourne, Esq.

Chairman CWNC: MRS. MARGARET FRY OBE
Secretary: MISS MARGARET PALMER



The Rt. Hon. Mrs Margaret Thatcher F.R.S. M.P.
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

30 May 1984

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Mrs Thatcher

As you know I have now been Chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission for just over a year, initially appointed by Willie Whitelaw. It has been an interesting and challenging year during which I have learnt a great deal. My appointment has also coincided with the planning and launching of W.I.S.E. year, and I have taken every opportunity of meeting young women including engineers, managers, bankers, students, and graduates of both polytechnics and universities, and girls still at school.

It is difficult to generalise, as clearly their aspirations vary considerably. I have however been impressed with their common sense, clear-sightedness, technological capability, personal charm and sheer potential.

I think they have a great deal to offer their employers both now and in the future and thereby the prosperity of our country. The more enlightened employers are aware of this and are beginning to make efforts to attract them into their firms; this is particularly true of the electronic "sunrise" industries in support of W.I.S.E.. They know that with the number of 18 year olds peaking and falling dramatically over the coming decade they must attract women and girls into the technological fields if they are to expand. I am personally working very hard on the W.I.S.E. campaign primarily to encourage women into these fields but also because I feel it will contribute greatly to our future industrial success as a country. These young women are conscious of the difficulties they will encounter in bridging the career break when they start their families.

They are conscious too that there are still prejudices against the promotion of women into senior positions - even though senior managers today have your shining example before them in the most difficult job in our country.

Continued.../



Recently Grey Gowrie, Tom King and Paul Channon have made excellent speeches encouraging the provision of post-career break courses, part-time work, flexi-time, job sharing, and many other ways in which enlightened management can see that precious feminine resources and qualifications need not be lost either to their owners or their employers. These speeches of course whilst very much appreciated at the time, do not always receive great publicity.

I am struck by the considerable efforts being made by the S.D.P. and the Labour party to attract the young qualified womens' vote, whereas the Conservative Party perhaps looks backwards to the days when married women - like me - did not continue in paid jobs after marriage.

These qualified young women are very valuable, and indeed the country has invested a good deal in their education and training. I do believe the Conservative Party needs to address itself to thinking how they can be encouraged in their careers perhaps by setting up a small Central Office Working Party. On the day of the C.W.N.C. Conference I discussed this with Trixie Gardiner of Parkes and Sir Basil Feldman, and Emma Nicholson on a different occasion, and they were receptive to the idea.

These young women are not wanting an easy option, but they will need a sympathetic environment if they are to fulfil their potential. It is important that they should see the Conservative Party taking an intelligent interest in them and ensuring thereby the effective utilisation and conservation of half our human talents on which our commercial prosperity depends.

As Prime Minister, if you were willing to do so, you could give industry and commerce a strong lead in the right direction, and show these young women that the Conservative Party is on their side. They are the women of the future.

I hope you do not mind my writing in this vein, but I do believe it is of great importance.

Yours sincerely
Platt

The Baroness Platt of Writtle
Greenbury House
The Green
Writtle
Essex

CM1 3DU